THE

DRURIAD:

OR

STRICTURES

ON THE

PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS

OF

Drury-Lane Theatre:

A SATIRICAL POEM:

WITH NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

" *Cuncti adsint, meritæque expectent præmia palmæ:*

* * * * * * * * *

" *Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine habetur.*" —— VIRG.

" My lord, I will use them according to their deserts." —

" Godsbodikins, man, better! Use every man after his desert, and who shall

" escape whipping? — Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they

" deserve, the more merit is in your bounty." —— SHAKESPEAR.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

I Cannot think the ſubject of the following Poem ill choſen, whatever faults there may be in the manner of its execution. As ſome kingdoms are found to be influenced by the good or bad qualities of the ſovereign, ſo the theatres of this country may be conſidered as inſtruments by which virtue or vice may be equally propagated: they are univerſally frequented; for, who is ſo high as not to honour them with an occaſional viſit, and who is ſo low as not to deem himſelf an expert judge of theatrical merit? That this merit is on the wane, I fear, cannot be denied; and I think one of the cauſes may be traced to that laxity of morals which pervades all ranks of people. The time was when a vicious or fooliſh character, among his brethren behind the curtain, would have been more dreaded, by an actor of genius, than the hiſſes of the multitude before it. "Fu-

it

it iſta quondam in hac republica virtus, ut viri fortes acrioribus ſuppliciis civem pernicioſum quàm acerbeſſimum hoſtem coercerent." Cicero.

If it be allowed that an actor cannot do complete juſtice to his part unleſs he feel all the energy which the character is ſuppoſed to feel; or if, in other words, moral ſenſations and the glow of conſcious virtue enhance the player's powers; ſurely thoſe powers muſt be impaired, if not totally annihilated, by debauchery and habitual intoxication; an obſervation not totally uſeleſs to thoſe who, however they may ſlight virtue for virtue's ſake, will yet adhere to her when, like a modern heireſs, ſhe brings an ample fortune to increaſe her attractions.

I have only to declare that I commit this Poem to the preſs blinded by no partiality and influenced by no unworthy motives; that my pages are ſtained with no private ſcandal, and that, whatever may be the fate of the Poem, I ſhall never bluſh at an undertaking which has for its object the praiſe of the meritorious and the ridicule of the undeſerving.

THE

THE DRURIAD, &c.

AUTHOR.

LET loftier poets tune their martial lays,
And ſing the patriot's or the hero's praiſe;
For caſual fare, like hackney-coachmen, ply,
Blame where they can, and, where they cannot, — lie:
Each Paſquin now may laſh his empty brother,
Or, like thin ſpiders, prey upon each other:
Snug in my ſhell, I ſhun their watchful fury,
Laugh at them all, and ſing the praiſe of Drury;
My careleſs Muſe now hovers round her walls,
And lifts her dome yet higher than St. Paul's.

FRIEND.

A wretched ſimile! of Eaſtern hue,
'Tis neither gaudy, elegant, or new;

Would you be all that ere poor bard desir'd,
Be read by parsons, by the fair admir'd,
To love and Laura tune th'enervate lyre,
Let hot-press'd paper* glow with am'rous fire;
Ambrosial flow'rs† twine round your mood and tense,
And labour'd nothings take the place of sense.

AUTHOR.

I'm all alive! Muse, plume your tow'ring wings,
Hush'd be the winds when charming Florio sings.

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* See this absurd and pernicious custom well ridiculed in "The Pursuits of Literature." A work which strongly and properly reprobates the practice of those, whose learning, "like a rich armour worn in heat of day," only serves to encumber the wearer. It is not our business to criticize the temper or motives of the author of that elaborate performance. He may possibly, to use the words of a modern poet, be "shrouded in a mist of moral spleen;" or he may be influenced by the purest intentions. The work is of extensive utility; and, as such, is entitled to our thanks.

† Such is the *celestial* phrase of Henry James Pye, Esq. "O'er June's ambrosial flow'rs." — This gentleman in his ardent devotion to the Muses seems totally to have forgotten the Graces; else, why the pompous repetition of the same turgid compound epithets that encumber without adorning his odes? We acknowledge that Poet Laureates are placed in a dangerous situation; like the pictures hung up in the Forum, they are exposed to the indiscriminate criticism of the multitude. Cibber, smarting under the lash of Pope, says "a lick at the Laureate" has ever been the fashion. I am sorry to observe, that the present bard cannot claim an exemption. I would recommend to his observation the following lines of Pope, speaking of Blackmore:

What, like Sir Richard, rumbling rough and hoarse,
With arms, and George, and Brunswick, crowd the verse;
Burst, with tremendous din, your ears asunder,
With gun, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder.

FRIEND.

FRIEND.

The fragrant morn ---

AUTHOR.

Nay, now your pow'r I doubt,
Each worthleſs ſonnet ---

FRIEND.

Prithee hear me out.
The fragrant morn her roſy bluſhes ſpreads,
And o'er the land a dewy influence ſheds,
Scarce has the ſun emerg'd from ocean's tide,
His beams yet ſleeping on yon mountain's ſide,
All nature wakes, life breathes in ev'ry gale,
The inſect-tribe ſpread forth the mimic ſail,
Aërial ſongſters chaunt the vocal lay,
Sport on the wing, and hail returning day.

AUTHOR.

Siſte, viator! let me ſet you right,
'Tis not the day! I hail returning night:
Through lamp and link-boys take my devious way,
Streets, carts, and "Bill, your honour!" to the play.

There point my quill, " ſhoot folly as it flies,
And catch the living manners as they riſe."*
Sooner ſhall Gallia ceaſe her hoſtile fury,
Sooner ſhall mighty George frequent old Drury,
In modern boſoms virtuous ardour burn,
Or loan-contractors zealous patriots turn,
Than I forego the critic's choiceſt food,
To laſh the worthleſs and to praiſe the good.

FRIEND.

But who art thou who thus preſum'ſt to wield
The weighty arms of Churchill in the field?

AUTHOR.

In life's low vale, I mean not to aſpire
To Churchill's honours and poetic fire,
But merely to divert an idle hour,
Of Drury's hoſt to aſcertain the pow'r;
And, with a candid, not ill-judging, ſpirit,
Award their different degrees of merit.

* Pope.

FRIEND.

But why alone on Drury " wag your tongue?"*
Why Covent-Garden's actors leave unſung?

AUTHOR.

Know, with buffoons I cannot condeſcend
My page to tarniſh and my time to ſpend:
Crawford, in age, though not in wiſdom, grey,
Attempts in vain th'allotted part to play;
Though Abington ſpreads out her wrinkled arms,
The Widow Belmour now has loſt her charms.
O taſteleſs age, in folly how mature,
Such mad perverſion tamely to endure;
Haſte, venerable pair, and leave the ſtage,
For " beads and prayer-books are the toys of age."

A royal edict iſſues from the throne,
O! ſay what brilliant ſpectacle is ſhewn?
What conſtellation ſheds its brilliant ray?
Quick is the Georgium Sidus of the play!

* Hamlet.

By

By Reynolds taught,* ſee Lewis friſk and climb,
And Follett's carrots† grace the pantomime.

FRIEND.

If Covent-Garden's virtues are unknown,
Adopt the reigning mode, and praiſe your own;
Warton, in Pope, preſents us nothing new,
Pert Boſwell brings all Johnſon to our view,
In quarto ſee the man of ſtar and ribbon
Sedately uſher in the works of Gibbon;
Erſkine, ſelf-fancy'd ſcourger of the throne,
Now pleads his client's cauſe, and now his own.

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* By Reynolds taught. — The ſpeaking pantomimes of this gentleman, called by courteſy comedies, are at preſent generally known; but, as in all probability they will be ſoon forgotten, it was thought neceſſary to mention them here.

† As poſterity may be puzzled to underſtand the meaning of theſe words, know, all men, by theſe preſents, that the joke conſiſts in Mr. Follett, the clown, coming forward and ſitting down in the front of the ſtage, with a baſket containing three or four immenſe carrots; which, aſſiſted by ſome intro-ſuſceptive power in the vegetable, he has the appearance of devouring whole, to the great delight of the Britiſh audience.

Indocti ſtolidique et depugnare parati
Si diſcordet eques, media inter carmina poſcunt
Aut *urſum*, aut *pugiles*; hic nam plebecula gaudet.
Verum equitis quoque jam migravit ab *aure* voluptas
Omnis ad *incertos oculos*, et gaudia vana.

Holman

Holman plays Hotſpur: Shakeſpear, with a groan,
Sees Percy, and ſcarce knows him for his own!
Think you for foreign benefit they ſtrive?
Shakeſpear is dead, but Holman is alive;*
Self prompts the player, ſelf fills the tedious page,
Alike or in the cloſet or the ſtage.

AUTHOR.

Enough of this! proceed we to our ſong,
Attend my lays, and tell me where I'm wrong;
Hither, my muſe, thy wand'ring flight reſtrain,
Perch on my quill, and ſing of Drury-Lane.

Siddons,† great miſtreſs of each magic art,
To raiſe contending paſſions in the heart,

When

* *Holman.* — This is one of thoſe actors who ſhould receive a hint to pay more attention to their author and leſs to themſelves. Cibber wrote as well as acted for the ſtage, and ſucceeded: Holman has written too; but, "haud paſſibus æquis!"

Scribimus indocti doctique. — HOR.

† The great and unrivalled talents of this lady in tragedy are ſuch as would juſtly ſubject us to the imputation of vanity and folly, were we to attempt to enumerate them. With ſuch a diſtinguiſhed favourite of Melpomene before our eyes, it is painful to think that tragedy ſhould be in this nation overlooked and neglected, as is evinced by the cold manner in which the productions of our beſt dramatic writers are received upon the ſtage, though aided

When wretched Shore, depreſs'd with grief and pain,
Calls upon death, her laſt refource, in vain;
Or when, unaw'd by conſcience or by fear,
Macbeth drives on her impious mad career,
When horrid dreams at length her guilt reveal,
And on her hand ſhe ſhews the bloody ſeal;
When poor Cordelia, after wars alarms,
Expires with anguiſh in her father's arms;
In Beverley's diſtreſs and piercing moans;
In Iſabella's ſhrieks and dying groans;
O Siddons! thou alone the ſoul can'ſt thrill,
And melt us down, like Circe, to thy will.

When Shakeſpear bids contending paſſions wage,
Love, hatred, jealouſy, remorſe, and rage,

---

aided by the magic powers of her, who carries us into whatever regions the fiction of the poet places in our view.

Irritat, mulcet, falſis terroribus implet,
Ut magus; et modo me Thebis modo ponit Athenis. — Hor.

Let not poets any longer arrogate immortality to their works, when we ſee the productions of Dryden, Otway, Southern, and even Shakeſpear himſelf, placed upon the ſhelf: And for what? To pleaſe the taſte of a public, vitiated by the unſeemly traſh, iſſuing from the pen of O'Keefe, Reynolds, Morton, &c. &c.

Whoſe happy arts attention can command
When fancy flags, and ſenſe is at a ſtand. — Pope.

Or

Or paints the madneſs of the noble Dane;
Or fell ambition of the Highland thane;
Or Richard urges on his blood-ſtain'd courſe,
And madly cries "My kingdom for a horſe!"
Kemble,* in ſcenes like theſe, can nobly ſoar,
And make e'en Garrick's loſs be felt no more.

Next Jordan† comes, Thalia's fav'rite child,
And charms with naïveté and humour wild;
Miſs Peggy, Priſſy Tomboy, or Miſs Prue,
Oh! who can play ſo charmingly, ſo true?
But, in the name of ev'ry thing that's ſtrange,
Why ſuffer her in Farren's walk to range?
Why call her Lady Teazle, Lady Belle?
Still it is Jordan finely dreſs'd --- as Nell.

* We think it ſufficient to obſerve of this gentleman, (whoſe talents as an actor are too well known to require commendation here,) that his Coriolanus and Macbeth are noble inſtances of his powers, and that he has brought Hamlet to the achme of perfection.

† Who, that has witneſſed the admiral efforts of Mrs. Jordan in low comedy, does not regret to ſee her attempt ſuch parts as Lady Teazle and Eſtifania? After theſe extraordinary undertakings, we ſhall ſoon expect to ſee Mr. Banniſter, jun. in Richard III. and Mr. Suett in Beverley or Macbeth. As Mrs. Amlet ſays in the Confederacy, "We are all for appearing above what we are, and that is what ruins every body."

Farren had reach'd the ſummit of renown,
And who like her ſhall charm the partial town?
Ah! who ſhall now portray the modiſh wife,
When will another Farren ſpring to life!
But Lady Teazle, Lady Townly too,
Biſarre, and Eſtifania, --- all adieu!

Decamp* approaches! born to tread the ſtage,
At once the pride and pleaſure of the age;
Whether in tragic ſtole or comic veſt,
In each her pow'rs ſuperior are confeſs'd;
And when ſhe warbles Ariel's plaintive airs,
'Tis like the muſic of the tuneful ſpheres;

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* The ſatiriſt, averſe to exhibiting ſcenes of folly, fixes with delight on beauty and excellence: as the traveller, weary of the uniformity of a duſky heath, wanders with joy over fertile plains and enamelled meadows. Seldom have we received more various and rational pleaſure than from the truly excellent performances of Miſs Decamp. With a face well adapted to expreſs the ſentiments of the ſoul, an elegant and graceful perſon, appropriate action, and a knowledge of her author's meaning, which good underſtanding alone can give, this young lady bids fair to obtain general and unrivalled approbation. But, as the human mind, however variouſly gifted by nature, has ſtill ſome ſingle object in which it is peculiarly fated to figure, ſome caſt of character which is excluſively its province, we would ſtrongly recommend it to this young lady to ſtudy Mrs. Jordan's comic characters, without meaning to preclude her from thoſe occaſional variations, which no one can undergo with more juſtice and verſatility than herſelf.

"Reddere perſonæ ſcit convenientia cuique."

In

In ev'ry ſcene new beauties ſtand confeſs'd,
And the laſt character is ſtill the beſt.
But, oh! what pen with equal ſkill can trace
Th'expreſſive paſſions varying in her face?
A face uniting elegance and eaſe,
Prompt to delight, and emulous to pleaſe,
Still changing as the vary'd paſſions move,
And ſure in all to fix eſteem and love.
Ye erring critics! will ye ſtill deplore
That wit is fled and genius is no more?
That modern acting no more boaſts the art
" To raiſe the genius and to mend the heart?"
Attend ſubmiſſive to the voice of truth,
For, ſee, array'd in all the pride of youth,
Unconſcious of her own pre-eminence,
In graceful action, and in native ſenſe,
Decamp approaches! Envy hides her head,
And foul Detraction ſinks among the dead!
Each charm'd ſpectator inſtant homage pays,
And all is loſt in univerſal praiſe.

The tragic Muſe, by various evils croſs'd,
Some future day, ſhall mourn her Siddons loſt!

Yet one remains, and critics muſt confeſs,
Powell ſhall ſerve to make that loſs the leſs;
Expreſſive beauties mantle in her face;
Yet is her gaudy action void of grace.
But, when ſhe paints Almeria's tender woes,
Each ſympathetic heart with pity glows;
Nay more, would ſhe diſcard the tricks of art,
The outſpread arms, ſhrill voice, and meaſur'd ſtart;
Would ſhe converſe in nature's artleſs ſtrain,
Nor deign to walk in imitation's train;
Her native pow'rs would faireſt fame engage,
And a new Siddons might adorn the ſtage.

Old Churchill ſpoke in terms of warmeſt praiſe
Of Pope, the lively, in her youthful days:
Though ſixty ſummers o'er her head have flown,
Thalia claims this fav'rite for her own:
In Alſcrip, Malaprop, and Miſtreſs Page,
She ſtands without a rival on the ſtage;
And of her laſting charms, ſo wide the ſcope,
All the domeſtic virtues ſhine in Pope!

Palmer's

Palmer's rough tones no ſympathy impart,
Yet the man walks majeſtic through his part;
His voice, his action, and his perſon, good,
His author always clearly underſtood;
Firm as the Trojan chief, of form divine,
Whoſe mother-goddeſs made his temples ſhine;
'Twas his, (but not in our degen'rate days,)
'Twas his to mix the myrtle with the bays;
Through five long acts alert and gay to dance,
And realize the fictions of romance.
But now, alas! thoſe fairy ſcenes are fled,
The myrtle, and the bays, both droop the head!
In modern ſcenes ſolicitous to pleaſe,
He acts the gentleman with ſtudious eaſe;
And in ſome parts I ſee both ſenſe and ſpirit,
In Stukely and Iago ſterling merit,
With genuine Nature ſtrive: --- one part remains
To crown his merit and reward his pains.
See Packer, whom his dreſs in vain diſguiſes,
Seems half-ſeas over ere the curtain riſes;

Tott'ring

Tott'ring beneath the weight of plumes and age,
He ſpeaks *memento mori* to the ſtage.*
Haſte, Palmer! haſte! diſrobe the royal knave,
Aſſert your claims, and Drury's credit ſave;
Study the part, make Claudius all your own,
And drive the driv'ller from the Daniſh throne.

Old King,† with ev'ry requiſite to pleaſe,
Strong ſenſe, dry humour, wit, and comic eaſe,
Unrivall'd reigns, on Drury's claſſic boards,
In cruſty crabbed ſires and teſty lords.

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* It is ſurpriſing that the Manager ſhould remain ignorant of the moſt important part of his office, namely, an appropriate diſtribution of parts. Packer, ſome thirty years ago, might have been a tolerable actor; but ſurely he has had time to "ſtrut and fret his hour upon the ſtage," and ſhould now be "heard no more." The character of the Daniſh uſurper, in his hands, is deprived of all its intereſt, by loſing that crafty, yet daring, villany which Shakeſpear intended to portray. The fine ſoliloquy, "O my offence is rank!" &c. is entirely omitted, in pity, we ſuppoſe, to this old man's infirmities: but, it is time to inform Mr. Packer, that, when he attemps parts like theſe, "O my offence is rank!" would be no improper exclamation.

† In the veteran King we ſee an actor of ſterling excellence and merit. He poſſeſſes real humour unadulterated with buffoonery; a moſt rare quality in the preſent ſtate of the ſtage! But "Vitæ ſumma brevis, ſpem nos vetat inchoare longam." Mr. King's infirmities are now growing faſt upon him;

——— "His way of life
Is fallen into the ſear, the yellow leaf!"

And it is with infinite regret that we look forward to the time when he ſhall retire from that ſtage, of which he has ſo long been a diſtinguiſhed ornament.

See Charles,* a brother of the Kemble race,
With youthful figure and expreſſive face,
In ardent Malcolm admiration draws,
And claims in luckleſs Barnwell loud applauſe;
He, urging onward in the path of fame,
The native honours of his houſe to claim,
Shall gain the ſteep aſcent, by Siddons led,
While wreaths of living laurel grace his head.

Wroughton's† a uſeful player and a juſt,
And faithful to his manageric truſt,

---

* Mr. Charles Kemble's powers are daily expanding into excellence; and we look forward with pleaſure to the future eminence of this young actor.

Yet ſhall he mount, and keep his diſtant way,
Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate. —— GRAY.

† The power of managers to obtrude themſelves upon the public in what characters they pleaſe muſt often be abuſed, by laying them open to the attacks of vanity; while, from their high ſituation in the theatre, we preſume the real truth is not likely to offend their ears. The humorous author of the Connoiſſeur hints at a reverend biſhop, who kept his chaplains in a ſtate of ſuch extreme ſervility, that it was their cuſtom to aſk him at the concluſion of every deal at whiſt what his lordſhip would pleaſe to have for trumps? Mr. Wroughton may not perhaps be ſo highly pampered as the above-mentioned biſhop, but it was thought neceſſary to enlarge upon the frequent abſurdity of his conduct, that future managers may profit by his evil example.

"Bonum eſt fugienda aſpicere alieno in malo." — PUBL. SYR.

In

In ſome few characters, to give his due,
He acts with feeling and with judgement too.
What pity then to ſee the man preſume
To torture and burleſque poor Captain Plume!
" And never was a ſtory of more woe,"
Than Wroughton croaking love-ſick Romeo.

With ſhaggy wig, ſtiff knees, and lengthen'd ſtride,
Pedantic tone, and arms expanded wide,
Unmeaning emphaſis, theatric roar,
'Tis an automaton, or Barrymore!*
Dramatic Proteus! who, ſtrange to tell!
Plays ev'ry thing by turns, and nothing well!
Long has he ſtood, nor chang'd his firſt degree,
Fix'd at the freezing point of apathy;
And much I fear, that time, which, join'd with ſenſe,
Exalts true genius into excellence,
Will ne'er promote the man, whoſe ſole renown
Heads a banditti or aſſaults a town.

* Barrymore is one of thoſe perſonages, to make uſe of Pope's words, " Who never changed his principles or wig." — As his action and voice are uniform, ſo is his wig; as his gigantic method of uttering trivial ſentiments is uniform, ſo is his wig: pity the wig is not a better one!

Suett comes next: --- alas! and "Woe is me!
"T'have ſeen what I have ſeen, ſee what I ſee!
In ſome low ſcenes of Colman's motley ſtuff,*
Suett is ſometimes laughable enough;
But genuine humour, comic wit, and grace,
Are chang'd by him to mum'ry and grimace.
Poor Foreſight, ſkill'd in aſtrologic lore,
When Parſons died, you fell to riſe no more!

---

* The dramatic productions of Mr. Colman have a real claim to the title of motley. As a proof of this aſſertion, we beg leave to refer our readers to the Mountaineers and the Iron Cheſt, in both of which plays are lines not unworthy of a Congreve or a Rowe; but theſe are debaſed moſt miſerably by others, which are beneath the notice of criticiſm. Upon the whole, it appears, that the genius of this gentleman is happily adapted to the ſize of his theatre:

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere ſi velit, et varias inducere plumas
Undique collatis membris; aut turpitur atrum
Deſinat in piſcem mulier formoſa ſuperne
Spectatum admiſſi riſum teneatis, amici? — Hor.

It may be worth inquiry, why the public ſhould permit the performance of the Iron Cheſt at the Haymarket, after the decided ſentence pronounced upon it at Drury-Lane; as it muſt be obvious to the moſt ignorant ſpectator, that the play was caſt with much greater force at the laſt-mentioned theatre; for, while we reſpect the talents of Mr. Elliſton, we hold it ſomething like blaſphemy to place him in competition with Mr. Kemble, the firſt tragedian of the age; and how muſt the broad farcical humour of Fawcett ſuffer in compariſon with the acting of the late excellent Dodd! Perhaps it may be urged, that Fawcett ſtood next to Dodd in the perſonification of ſuch characters as Adam Winterton: if ſo, it muſt certainly be, as Virgil expreſſes it, "Proximus, ſed longo intervallo."

For ever clos'd, Burgoyne, is thy chaſte page,
And Gripe and Moneytrap muſt quit the ſtage.

With figure neat, and pretty lifeleſs face,
Goodall, alas! appears of ſtoic race!
Nor joy, nor grief, affect her lifeleſs frame,
Inanimate and gentle, mild and tame:
Yet, would ſhe call expreſſion to her aid,
Speak up, and cry, with Keckſey, "Who's afraid?"*
Her Roſalind would charm, and, in her cauſe,
All Drury's dome might ring with loud applauſe.

When Bannifter in Walter's part appears,
Who can deny the tributary tears?
And, of his real merits, not to baulk ye,
He's excellent in Gubbins, Scrub, and Gawkey:
But when, forgetting nature, form, and make,
He tries t'aſſume the gentleman and rake;

* We wiſh that Mrs. Goodall would avail herſelf of our friendly hints; ſhe might certainly become an actreſs of ſome merit: at preſent ſhe gives us an idea of a well-conſtructed automaton.

Or when in Tom with lively Lewis vies;
Heav'ns! how diſguſting to our ears and eyes!
Yet few comedians, of the preſent age,
Appear ſo well acquainted with the ſtage;
And, ſpite of ev'ry fault, the truth to own,
He has the art of pleaſing all the town.

When Shakeſpear's magic Tempeſt awes the ſoul,
When light'nings dart, waves daſh, and thunders roll;
Let beauteous Miller, diffident and fair,
Aſſume Miranda's wild angelic air:
Pale with affright, ſhe bends beneath the ſtorm,
While the rude winds unveil her lovely form;
"Poor ſouls! they periſh!" cries the maid diſtreſs'd,
"Poor ſouls! they periſh!" echoes ev'ry breaſt.

Dowton, in Cumberland's romantic Jew,
Portrays with feeling what the author drew;
In Scrub, or grave-digger, might gain renown:
Why are the corners of his mouth drawn down?
When merit fails, and nature's ſober grace,
Buffoonery but ill ſupplies their place.

Packer aſpires to Denmark's regal chair,
" O Hamlet! what a falling off was there!"
Palmer's the king for Gertrude's bridal feaſt,
And Packer, — he ſhould play the churliſh prieſt.

When vulgar Heidelberg aſſumes her airs,
Deaf to her brother's threats, her niece's tears,
Wallcott comes forth, with ſquabby ſhape and mien,
Equal to Meſdames Hopkins, Webb, and Green.

O popular applauſe! how ſhort thy date!
Crouch ſinks beneath the hand of time and fate!
Hard is the taſk the ſlight remains to trace
Of what was Phillips' elegance and grace.

Old Banniſter, in tones of deepeſt baſs,
In Caliban diſplays his ugly face;
And critics muſt allow, upon the whole,
Some ſhare of merit to his Mother Cole;
Then let him paſs, the ſocial bowl allow,
Applauded once, we well may ſuffer now.

With liſping voice, and action full of buſtle,
In Fribble ſhines the Margate hero Ruſſell;

In Sparkiſh decent, and in Surface mean,*
The worſt Sir Lucius that the ſtage has ſeen!

O mortals! vain and wayward, ever prone
To vilify all merit but your own;
Deaf to reproof, to public ſarcaſms blind,
Ye quit the proper ſphere by fate aſſign'd:
Each ſtripling riſks ſome daring enterprize,
And, giant-like, would ruſh into the ſkies.

The youth, whoſe pow'rs are neither good nor bad,
In humble merit's ſober mantle clad;
Whoſe mighty taſk extends to "Good, my liege!"
Secure or in a chorus or a ſiege;
Whoſe modeſt tongue, unknown to wiſdom's lore,
Speaks what his author wrote, and ſpeaks no more;
Who marks the preſent hour, recalls the paſt,
And makes each night a critic on the laſt;

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* Strange that ſo few actors can play the gentleman! — As to Mr. Ruſſell, — but it would be a waſte of time to expatiate on his demerits. All our aſtoniſhment is to think that he ſhould *attempt* ſuch characters as Charles Surface; eſpecially as the excellence of Smith is ſtill freſh in the minds of the public.

——— Quid enim contendat hirundo
Cycnis? LUCRET.

Him ſhall applauſes greet where numbers pour,
Wentworth or Davis, Webb or Phillimore.
But, when I ſee ſome forward youngſter ſtalk,
Smit with the rage of tragedy and talk,
O'erleap each fence of modeſty and fear,
And boldly mount to Shakeſpear's radiant ſphere,
Indignant, then, I ſpurn compaſſion's call;
Contempt and laughter wait upon his fall:
The hapleſs elf lies humbled in the duſt,
While ſcoffing crowds confeſs the ſentence juſt.

But, hark! a plaintive voice amid the gale,
In numbers ſweet, breathes out a tender tale;
Sure 'tis ſome minſtrel of the fairy band,
'Tis more than mortal! — No, 'tis little Bland.

With voice mellifluous, though ſomewhat weak,
And often huſky, view the warbler Leak.

On Margaretta's ſimple artleſs lays
She builds a monument of laſting praiſe;
And, oh! 'twould melt the ſterneſt heart to pity
To hear her ſing her "lowly plaintive ditty."

See Biggs, a candidate for London faime,
In Drury's annals now records her name:
Dauntleſs ſhe enters on the claſſic ground,
With univerſal praiſe and plaudits crown'd.

Aikin, with feeling and good ſenſe endu'd,
Can act the parent prudent, firm, and good;
The Britiſh merchant, gen'rous, open, juſt;
And the old ſteward, faithful to his truſt.

Patient and ſimple, Drury's weakeſt tool,
With too much folly e'en to play the fool;
With awkward form, and vague quieſcent face,
Wretched buffoonery, and low grimace;
Lo! Wathen tumbles in, by folly led,
And quick compulſive gravity of head.
Alas, alas! poor ſhifting weather-cock!
Why didſt thou change the halberd for the ſock?
Thy lagging purſe and wit could ill afford
The feſtive joys of Wargrave and her lord!
Small bounds divide the idler and the player;
The ſoldier turns an actor in deſpair.

See lovely Roſe, whom circling crowds adore,
Ne'er felt for Bulloek half the ſhame before.*
Heav'ns, what a contraſt! View the motley feaſt;
'Tis Pan and Venus, beauty and the beaſt.
Not Farquhar's wit could force thy friends to ſtay,
Though Dibdin's ſong ek'd out the murder'd play.
While ſhows like theſe can Britain's care engage,
I ſpurn ſuch folly, and renounce the ſtage;
Calm and remote, neglect the paſſing ſcene,
Nor quit my roof for Wathen and the ſpleen.

Who has not oft beguil'd his ev'ning hours,
Charm'd with the melody of Kelly's pow'rs?
Aided by him, ſtill Arne enchants the town,
And Kelly adds new gems to Handel's crown.
Oft have we heard, well pleas'd, yet mourn'd the while,
His tones melodious, but his action vile:

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* The part of Bullock was performed, by Mr. Wathen, not for the public benefit, but his own. The good nature of a Britiſh audience was never better exemplified than in the above inſtance. — Surely there never was ſuch an age of toleration! — Dibdin's ſong of the *Waggoner* was alſo ſung by our hero, to exhibit his talents in another point of view. To ſay the execution was intolerable is far from ſufficient, and yet we have neither time nor patience to ſay more. — All was huſhed! for, at leaſt half the audience was aſleep.

Somno poſiti ſub nocte ſilenti
Lenibant curas et corda oblita laborum. — VIRG.

Our eyes muſt weep at what our ears rejoice;
So ſpare the man, in pity to his voice!

Bob Palmer can a drunken ſtory tell,
His Jeremy and Trip are paſſing well;
But, for the airy fops of Farquhar's age,
When will another Dodd adorn the ſtage?

For Hollingſworth we have not far to look,*
What is the part he plays? --- Oh! Jacob Cook!

Badd'ley, thy loſs muſt Drury ſtill deplore,
Thy Moſes ſet the audience in a roar:
Now Wewitzer the uſurer aſſumes,
And ſtruts a magpie in the peacock's plumes.

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* We are aſtoniſhed to ſee this man figuring away in ſuch characters as the Baron of Oakland, Mr. Hardy, and Sir Francis Wronghead. — When will managers learn their duty to the public? and when diſtinguiſh between unaffected humour and unnatural buffoonery? — To Hollingſworth we may apply the lines of Peter Pindar:

" Of acting I have ſeen enough,
" Moſt vile, moſt execrable, ſtuff;
" But none ſo bad as thine, I vow to God!"

In Mellon's face what gay good humour lies,
How archly roll her ſparkling gipſy eyes!
And when their fire ſhe darts in Lydia Languiſh,
O lovely nymph! I cry, aſſuage my anguiſh!

Sedgwick, in Woodley, ſtands to public view,
Or the brave captain of a ſmuggling crew:
And Dignum's voice harmonious, ſoft, and clear,
Though far from pow'rful, charms the liſt'ning ear.

For walking gentlemen, and trailing lords,
Grac'd with becoming paucity of words;
Or, for the bleeding captain in Macbeth,
Who talks of honour, murder, ſcars, and death;
Or of conſpirators to make a cluſter;
Holland and Caulfield here may well paſt muſter.

Maddocks and Phillimore, ye brilliant pair!
Let Banquo's bloody murder be your care:
While Trueman cries, aghaſt, in fearful mood,
"Methought, my lord, I ſaw a moving wood!"

Let

Let black-ey'd Heard, and Stuart tattling fast,
Of vixen chambermaids divide the caſt:
And Tidſwell tall, with Booth, the ancient crone,
Lead in the queen, or ſtand behind the throne.

FRIEND.

Enough! enough! now let the curtain fall,
Here ceaſe your ſong, and bid good night to all.

AUTHOR.

The Muſe now reſts, her purpos'd labours o'er,
Safe from her toil, and landed on the ſhore:
Each actor view'd in Fancy's magic glaſs,
Walks o'er her page like royal Banquo's race.
Oh! would kind Fate, like his, her offspring bleſs,
Exalt with favour, and with ſmiles careſs,
Her moral page ſhould circling crowds delight,
And added vigour aid her tow'ring flight.

Genius of Shakeſpear, from thy heav'nly ſphere,
Look down with pity on thy vot'ries here:

See pantomimic jargon, ev'ry ſeaſon,
Uſurp the place of common ſenſe and reaſon.
Some riſing poet, O great Bard! inſpire,
With one bright ſpark of thy immortal fire,
Reclaim the taſte of this degen'rate age,
And reign once more triumphant o'er the ſtage.

THE END.